



NEWSLETTER

Number 24

Spring 2012

BMIG Business

Welcome to the latest issue of the BMIG newsletter. The banner may look different but the aim of the newsletter is still the same; to keep recorders informed about the activities of the Group and our recording schemes. Thanks to Paul Richards for his work designing the new logo – a little more inclusive (who let the *Lithobius* in?) than the previous one as well as being more compact.

Something else that remains the same is the problem of getting sufficient copy. It is always good to see new contributors – welcome to Chris Proctor – but the stalwarts still make up the bulk of the newsletter and even they have struggled to fill the usual number of pages this issue. I do not believe that the great majority of readers are passive members of BMIG. Many more of you must be out and about in the field so why not let your fellow recorders know what you get up to? It does not have to be the discovery of a new species to the country or even the county, just an observation or record that interested you. If it was of interest to you then the chances are that other recorders will be interested too.

When you do get around to sending in your articles please note that I have changed my email address. Please send your contributions to arachne2222@aol.com.

Paul Lee, 33 Lawford Place, Lawford, Manningtree, Essex CO11 2PT

AGM notice

All BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 8pm on Friday, 13th April 2011. The venue will be Northern College, Wentworth Castle, Stainborough, Barnsley.

The present committee welcomes nominations for officers and ordinary committee members from any BMIG member. Ideally nominations would be communicated to the secretary beforehand but they can also be made from the floor at the AGM.

2012 BMIG AGM and Field Weekend

I can recommend the meeting for the experienced and beginners alike. It is a great way to catch up with folks and hear about the latest Myriapod and isopod news. We will also have some interesting evening presentations and there's an opportunity to have a first look and buy the new CD of ebooks at a special price. The venue for the meeting is the 18th century Wentworth Castle stately home, situated in 40 acres of wood and parkland, which in itself makes the trip worthwhile. It is very accessible from the M1 and Manchester to the West.

The local countryside is very nice indeed, with high acid moorland to the west going down towards lowland limestone in the east, with large areas of woodland throughout. Our groups are sporadically recorded in this area and offer plenty of scope for finding a good variety of species. Local records centres and reserves managers are very keen to receive new invertebrate information for the region. *Leptoiulus belgicus* has been found in the grounds of Wentworth castle. The area may well harbour *Armadillidium pictum* somewhere as yet unknown as it is not far from other known sites. There isn't a single *Trichoniscoides* record for miles around which someone may be able to rectify. *Lithobius borealis* is scarce but known from a couple of local sites and most other centipedes are very under recorded. I hope *Craspedosoma rawlinsii* might also turn up somewhere beyond the single, local, Sheffield site. There is even an entire 10K square with no woodlouse records!

Paul Richards, pedesnPods@yahoo.co.uk

Centipede Records

Almost all of the centipede records submitted by individuals, from field meetings and from local record centres have now been sent to the Biological Records Centre, Wallingford towards the eventual production of an atlas for Britain & Ireland. However, inevitably there will still be a few records going in over the next few months and probably even after the first draft maps are produced so please continue to send new centipede records in to me (as cards or electronically) and I will submit them to BRC in electronic format.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Myriapod and Isopod courses

Friday 20th April 2012: Camborne (Cornwall College, Rosewarne) Millipedes, Centipedes & Woodlice Workshop led by Tony Barber. For bookings or more information contact Sue Scott of ERCCIS (Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly), Five Acres, Allet, Truro TR4 9DJ.

sue.scott@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk or ERCCIS website at <http://www.ercis.co.uk>

Anamastigona pulchella (Silvestri) - a millipede new to Britain

The Plants for Bugs project at RHS Garden Wisley is a three-year study investigating whether the geographic origin of garden plants significantly influences invertebrate biodiversity. The project comprises three treatments: native plants (those originating in Britain), near-native plants (not native to Britain but originating in the Northern Hemisphere) and exotic plants (originating from the Southern Hemisphere). Invertebrates are sampled 5-6 times per year using a suite of sampling methods which enable RHS scientists to capture detailed information on the abundance and diversity of the ground-dwelling, epigeal and aerial invertebrate fauna. Further information can be found at: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Science/Plant-pests/Projects/Plants-for-Bugs--investigating-invertebrate-abundance.aspx>.

Sarah Al-Beidh has been helping with invertebrate identification and has sent me some problematical woodlice, millipede and centipede specimens for confirmation. Among the samples collected in August 2011 were two small, immature Chordeumatid millipedes reminiscent of *Anthogona britannica* (a species confined to South Devon). I promptly put in a request for 'a mature male, please' and in December three mature specimens were delivered, including the eagerly anticipated male.

At 9-10mm the adults were too large to be *A. britannica*, but too small to be *Craspodesoma rawlinsii*. The most striking features of the adult specimens were the extremely stout body setae and the very long legs (up to twice body width). Both characters were very conspicuous in the coiled, preserved specimens. Examination of the male gonopods, and the distinctive 10th coxae, identified the specimen as *Anamastigona pulchella* (Silvestri).

Anamastigona pulchella is native to Italy, but is well known as an introduction in Northern Ireland (Anderson, 1996; Lee, 2006). This discovery at Wisley Garden represents the first record for Britain. It should be expected to occur at other similar sites throughout Britain.

References:

Anderson, R. (1996) *Anamastigona pulchellum* (Silvestri) an addition to the fauna of northern Europe, recorded from Ireland. *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group*, **12**: 7-11.
Lee, P. (2006) *Atlas of the Millipedes (Diplopoda) of Britain and Ireland*. Sofia-Moscow; Pensoft Publishers.

Steve Gregory, Earth Trust, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4QZ

Polydesmus barberii in Corbridge Cave, Brixham, south Devon

Corbridge Cave lies in Berry Head Quarry, 1.5 km east of Brixham Harbour at NGR SX941566. The cave has a small entrance opening into two large chambers with connecting passages, linking up to a higher cave (The Cavern). The whole system has a length of 210 m. On 13th August 2005 we surveyed the cave for fauna and found white polydesmid millipedes in the first chamber, about 13-14 m from the entrance. This site was on a boulder covered in roots and lay in the dark zone due to a couple of bends in the small entrance passage. Other fauna at the same spot included *Blaniulus guttulatus*, the woodlouse *Androniscus dentiger* and a snail *Oxychilus* sp. The polydesmid millipedes were seen repeatedly in the cave over the next few years, most often in the first chamber where many plant roots are present, but also through most of the rest of the cave, into areas some way from the entrance where they can be found wandering over mud floors and rocks. On 1st June 2011 they were unusually abundant in the cave and the opportunity was taken to take samples. These were identified by Paul Lee as *Polydesmus barberii*.

Polydesmus barberii is a Mediterranean species which in Britain is restricted to south Devon and may have been introduced via the horticultural trade (Lee, 2006; Paul Lee, pers. comm). As such it seems most likely to have reached Berry Head from nearby gardens in Brixham - Berry Head House Hotel lies about 300 m west of the cave. The consistent presence of this species in Corbridge Cave over a period of over 5 years (sometimes in good numbers) strongly suggests that an established population is present. The species has been recorded from caves in Italy (Paul Lee, pers. comm.) so the presence of a population in Corbridge Cave is perhaps not surprising.

Reference

Lee, P. (2006) *Atlas of the Millipedes (Diplopoda) of Britain and Ireland*. Sofia-Moscow; Pensoft Publishers.

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Ebooks

The three new electronic books from the British Myriapod & Isopod Group are now available:

Introduction to Myriapods and Centipedes

Introduction to Millipedes

Introduction to Woodlice

All three are only available together on a single CD from Nature Bureau at <http://www.naturebureau.co.uk/shop> Priced* **£10** for all three + VAT and postage (**£13.20**) Or can be downloaded directly from the Nature Bureau website (**£12**). For a limited time, copies will also be available at BMIG field meetings and training courses for just **£10**. Ask your local recorder.

The CD comprises over **300** pages, with general introductions on classification, morphology, life histories, collecting, recording and identification. Each book has its own format with keys and species galleries. Some species

restricted to the south or coasts of Britain are not included, but the majority of species encountered inland are described. Over **750** full colour images show many species alive for the first time, including some of the rarest in Britain.

The ebooks can be used as an introduction for beginners, a source of colour images to complement other identification publications or as a formal presentation to a group. The CDs have been used as the basis of identification day schools, but are ideal for individual study. BMIG members are encouraged to use the ebooks as a basis for talks to local societies to promote our groups. Loaded to a Kindle or iPad, some people are also using them in the field for identification, or as reference material on guided walks. For the less technically minded, they do print out quite well to provide a hard copy if required. Two pages per side is recommended to save on paper, but still quite readable.

*The production of the ebooks has been heavily subsidised through a generous grant from OPAL, allowing them to retail at half the original price



For more info contact Paul Richards at pedesnponds@yahoo.co.uk

Some interesting woodlice records for Berkshire and Hampshire

Following the BENHS woodlouse/millipede/centipede workshop in October, Keith Lugg "fired with enthusiasm and some useful searching tips" has been out to see what he can find in his local area; and with some success! The day after the workshop he found *Porcellionides cingendus* at an inland locality in north Hampshire, (Vyne Estate, SU62-56-, vc 12). Subsequently, he found *Armadillidium pulchellum* in Berkshire, not once, but twice (Ufton Wood, SU63-63- and Benyon's Inclosure, SU61-63-, vc 22). In both cases it was found under bark on rotting pine stumps. This is akin to the habitat described by Steve Hopkin (1986, BISG newsletter 21) for his record of this species in North Hampshire. This January Keith visited the south Hampshire coast and added *Eluma caelatum* to his tally (Highcliffe Undercliffs, SZ21-93, vc 11). Specimens were collected from beneath house-bricks at the bottom of a slump below a car park. These records represent new vice-county records for all three species.

This raises the question, have these three species been overlooked in Berkshire and Hampshire? In the case of *A. pulchellum* this may be the case. The few records are typically from relict heathland with pine trees, a habitat that

is generally considered not worth surveying for woodlice and specimens can be easily mistaken for the ubiquitous *A. vulgare*. In contrast, both *P. cingendus* and *E. caelatum* are often associated with synanthropic sites. Although mainly coastal in Britain, *P. cingendus* does occur inland over a large tract of the adjacent counties of Sussex and Surrey, where climatic conditions appear to be suitable for this oceanic species. However, many of these inland records date back to the 1980s. *E. caelatum* is mainly restricted to south-eastern England, but outlying (coastal) populations are known elsewhere in Britain. It is possible that since the 1980s both species have been gradually increasing their respective ranges through unintentional human-aided means. All three species should therefore be looked for in similar habitats over the whole of southern England.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2012
Please send your contributions to reach the editor by
30 September 2012

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre.

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